

Washington's Beach Environmental Assessment, Communication and Health (BEACH) Program

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Abstract

The Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act of 2000 was signed into federal law as an amendment to the Clean Water Act. The intent of the BEACH Act is to reduce the risk of disease to users of the Nation's marine recreational waters. Through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), grant money is being allocated to states for the development of programs that will monitor pathogens in coastal marine waters used by the public and notify them of potential exposure to micro-organisms.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) is coordinating the development and implementation of a BEACH program for Washington State. Ecology, in collaboration with the Department of Health, many other state, county, and local agencies, and the Surfrider Foundation, is developing written guidance for the monitoring program. Washington's BEACH Program will monitor heavily used marine recreational beaches for *Enterococci*. The BEACH Program will rank public marine recreational beaches according to potential pollution problems and input from the public through workshops and surveys, monitoring those most at risk and of high-use. Signage on the beach, a hotline number, and sample results available via the Web will be used to reduce the risk of disease by notifying the public of conditions potentially hazardous to human health and safety. BEACH monitoring will start in summer 2003.